

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 04043 01 OF 02 091527Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 04043

USDOC FOR BEWT

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TAGS:PARM, SHUM, ECON, EEWT, UR, US, XF, XA
SUBJECT: GYORGIY ARBATOV ON US-SOVIET RELATIONS

SUMMARY: DURING ONE HOUR AND FORTY-FIVE MINUTE MEETING
MARCH 7 WITH FIVE RESIDENT AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN AND
EMBASSY E/C COUNSELOR, USA/CANADA INSTITUTE DIRECTOR
GYORGIY ARBATOV MADE FOLLOWING NOTEWORTHY OBSERVATIONS ON
US-SOVIET RELATIONS WHILE RELATING IMPRESSIONS OF RECENT
VISIT TO U.S.:

-- US/SOVIET RELATIONSHIP WOULD BE POSITIVE BUT FOR
INTERNAL SITUATION IN U.S., WHICH CAUSES CARTER ADMINIS-
TRATION TO MOVE WITH EXTREME CAUTION;

-- USG SHOULD EDUCATE AMERICAN PEOPLE MORE ABOUT SALT BUT
FAILS TO DO SO, PERHAPS FOR FEAR OF LOSING BARGAINING
CHIPS; RECENT USG REVELATION THAT SOVIETS HAVE ABIDED BY
SALT 1 WAS HELPFUL BUT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE;

-- THE COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY COULD BE SIGNED NOW,
SINCE SOVIETS HAVE CHANGED STAND ON PNE'S, BUT THE
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 04043 01 OF 02 091527Z

ADMINISTRATION "SCRATCHES ITS HEAD;"

-- HE, PERSONALLY, BELIEVES PRESIDENT DID NOT KNOW IN
ADVANCE ABOUT SADAT'S DEMARCHE TO ISRAEL - "OTHERWISE, HOW
COULD HE HAVE APPROVED JOINT US-SOVIET DECLARATION?" - BUT
CIA MIGHT HAVE KNOWN;

-- SOVIET ACTION IN HORN OF AFRICA, ABOUT WHICH PONOMAREV DELEGATION HEARD "SOME AWFUL THINGS," WAS NOT PART OF SOVIET MASTER PLAN BUT WAS A "SITUATION TO WHICH SOVIETS HAD RESPONDED."

-- HE WAS PERSUADED THAT THERE COULD BE NO CHANGE IN JACKSON/VANIK AMENDMENT THIS YEAR DUE TO (A) POLITICAL SITUATION IN U.S. AND (B) TIDE OF PROTECTIONISM IN U.S. WHICH THOUGH DIRECTED AT JAPAN, MAKES AMENDMENT OF TRADE LEGISLATION UNTIMELY.

-- PROGRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE IN USSR WOULD NOT HELP US-SOVIET RELATIONS; WHEN ONE CASE IS SOLVED, US RAISES A NEW ONE; "WE'LL NEVER SATISFY YOU;"

-- SOVIETS FIND AMERICANS "NOT THE MOST LIKEABLE PARTNERS" IN A DIALOGUE, WORSE THAN WEST GERMANS, BUT WE ARE SHACKLED TOGETHER BY EVENTS WE CANNOT CONTROL;
-- AFTER ONE YEAR HE CANNOT EVALUATE PRESIDENT CARTER, BUT IF THINGS DO NOT CHANGE, IT WILL BE BAD FOR THE U.S.

END SUMMARY.

1. ARBATOV, WHO WAS FLANKED BY USA/CANADA INSTITUTE OFFICIALS SHERSHNEV, IVANYAN AND BOBRAKOV, RECEIVED US BUSINESSMEN UPON REQUEST OF US/USSR TRADE AND ECONOMIC COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT RICHARD O'BRIEN.
CHASE-MANHATTAN, IBM, OCCIDENTAL AND ARTHUR ANDERSON
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 04043 01 OF 02 091527Z

REPRESENTATIVES ALSO ATTENDED ON INVITATION BASIS, AND EMBASSY E/C COUNSELOR WAS INCLUDED UPON O'BRIEN'S REQUEST. DISCUSSION INVOLVED SOME GIVE AND TAKE WITH ESPECIALLY CHASE (DAVID BUCKMAN) AND ON ONE OCCASION OXY (DAN GARINE) REPRESENTATIVES SPEAKING UP. DETAILS OF DISCUSSION WILL FOLLOW BY AIRGRAM.

2. ARBATOV STUCK PRIMARILY TO POLITICAL THEMES THROUGHOUT, AS O'BRIEN HAD APPARENTLY REQUESTED. HE DID MENTION "WARM" (I.E. CORDIAL) ATMOSPHERE OF UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION SESSION IN NEW YORK WHERE ROBERT ROOSA AND OTHER RANKING AMERICAN BUSINESS FIGURES APPARENTLY CONVINCED HIM THAT DUE TO POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND RISING DANGER OF PROTECTIONISM IN U.S., THERE WAS NO CHANCE TO REVISE JACKSON/VANIK AMENDMENT THIS YEAR (DESPITE VANIK'S OWN FERVENT DISASSOCIATION FROM IT IN TALK WITH ARBATOV). ARBATOV PEDDLED SOFT KEY THE FLATTERING LINE THAT BUSINESSMEN ARE BETTER INFORMED ABOUT USSR AND MORE REALISTIC THAN POLITICIANS, BUT IF HIS INTERLOCUTORS WERE MUCH IMPRESSED, THEY DID NOT SHOW IT.

3. ARBATOV STUCK TO THEME THROUGHOUT DISCUSSION THAT ONLY

U.S. IS TO BLAME FOR PRESENT STATE OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS, WHICH COULD BE POSITIVE BUT FOR EXCESSIVE CONCERN BY CARTER ADMINISTRATION ABOUT WHAT IT PERCEIVES TO BE AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT USSR. HE STATED AT OUTSET THAT HIS IMPRESSIONS OF U.S., JUDGING BY RECENT PRESS ARTICLES, MIGHT ALREADY BE OUTDATED. FOR EXAMPLE, HE HAD NEVER HEARD ANYONE IN U.S. CALL SALT II "IMPOSSIBLE" TO RATIFY, BUT HE WAS LESS SURE OF THAT NOW. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT MENTION WORD LINKAGE, HE ARGUED STRONGLY THAT U.S. SHOULD NOT PERMIT OTHER ISSUES TO INFLUENCE ITS ATTITUDE ON SIGNATURE

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 04043 02 OF 02 091535Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MOSCOW 04043

OF A SALT AGREEMENT. IF DETENTE DID NOT GO FORWARD, HE WARNED, THERE WOULD BE RETROGRESSION, SINCE IT COULD NO MORE MARK TIME THAN COULD A BICYCLE BALANCE WITHOUT FORWARD MOTION.

4. ARBATOV SAID THAT VALUE OF PONOMAREV TRIP HAD BEEN TO BROADEN PERSPECTIVES OF SOME CONGRESSMEN, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT CLAIM IT HAD CHANGED THEIR VIEWS. SINCE ENTIRE ARBATOV PRESENTATION SUGGESTED ONE-SIDED EDUCATIONAL PROCESS, COUNSELOR INQUIRED IF SOVIETS, TOO, HAD LEARNED FROM THE ENCOUNTER. ARBATOV REPLIED THAT THEY HAD COME AWAY WITH SOME "NEW UNDERSTANDING." WHEN ARBATOV WAS MAKING SKEPTICAL MENTION OF ADMINISTRATION'S CLAIM IT HAD NO FOREKNOWLEDGE OF ORIGINAL SADAT INITIATIVE, COUNSELOR INQUIRED IF "SOVIETS" BELIEVED ADMINISTRATION'S STATEMENT. ARBATOV RESPONDED ARTFULLY THAT HE, PERSONALLY, BELIEVES PRESIDENT DID NOT KNOW, FOR OTHERWISE HOW COULD LATTER HAVE POSSIBLY APPROVED JOINT US-SOVIET DECLARATION IN OCTOBER? HOWEVER, CIA MIGHT HAVE KNOWN. ARBATOV MENTIONED "SERIOUS MISTAKES" OF U.S. IN HORN OF AFRICA,

IMPLYING THAT IT HAD ENCOURAGED SOMALI INVASION WHEREAS
PONOMAREV HAD WARNED SIAD BARRE ON EVE AGAINST IT. HOW
COULD SOMALIS HAVE DARED ATTACK WITHOUT SOME ENCOURAGEMENT,
HE WONDERED? ARBATOV ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER, WITH FLAT
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 04043 02 OF 02 091535Z

"YES" COUNSELOR'S COMMENT THAT SOMALIS HAD BEEN "WELL
ARMED."

5. ARBATOV SAID THAT SOVIETS FIND BULGARIANS AND EVEN WEST
GERMANS MORE AGGRESSIVE PARTNERS THAN AMERICANS, BUT WE ARE
SHACKLED TOGETHER BY FATE. BUCKMAN, ASSERTING THAT HE
SPEAKS FRANKLY, TOLD ARBATOV THAT NEITHER CONGRESS NOR
MIDDLE AMERICA MAN ON THE STREET COULD BE EXPECTED TO FAVOR
RATIFICATION OF SALT AGREEMENT IF SOVIETS HELP ETHIOPIA
TAKE OVER HORN OF AFRICA. ARBATOV RESPONDED THAT WHAT
HAPPENED IN AFRICA WAS NOT VERY IMPORTANT. IF SALT FAILED,
HE INQUIRED, WHAT WOULD BE THE CONSEQUENCES? (HIS
IMPLICATION WAS THAT THEY WOULD BE EXCEEDINGLY GRAVE.) HE
RECALLED THAT SOVIETS HAD BEEN WILLING TO MEET PRESIDENT
NIXON TO REACH AGREEMENT OF STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION EVEN
WHEN U.S. WAS "ESCALATING" WAR IN VIETNAM.

6. ARBATOV'S FRANKEST STATEMENTS OF PESSIMISM, HOWEVER,
CAME AFTER DAN GARINE OF OCCIDENTAL PETROLEUM, WHO IS
MARRIED TO A RUSSIAN CITIZEN, MENTIONED IMPORTANCE OF
COOPERATION IN YAKUTIA GAS BUT ADDED THAT PROGRESS ON HUMAN
RIGHTS IN USSR WOULD HELP THE CAUSE. ARBATOV SHOT BACK
THAT IT WOULD NOT HELP. WHEN ONE SUCH PROBLEM WAS SOLVED,
HE SAID, U.S. FINDS A NEW ONE. A BUKOVSKY IS KICKED OUT,
BUT NEW NAMES APPEAR. "WE'LL NEVER (BE ABLE TO) SATISFY
YOU," ARBATOV SAID. NOT LARGE, BUT WELL ORGANIZED, GROUPS
IN U.S., ACCORDING TO HIM, WERE WORKING ACTIVELY AGAINST
BETTER US-SOVIET RELATIONS. HE NOTED INEVITABILITY OF
ISSUES ARISING WHICH WILL DIVIDE US BUT ARGUED THAT THIS
SHOULD NOT PREVENT AGREEMENT IN OTHER AREAS.

7. AT CLOSE, ARBATOV SAID THAT HE COULD NOT EVALUATE
PRESIDENT CARTER AFTER ONE YEAR IN OFFICE. OF COURSE,
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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 04043 02 OF 02 091535Z

EISENHOWER, KENNEDY, JOHNSON AND NIXON COULD NOT HAVE BEEN
EVALUATED AT THAT POINT EITHER, HE ADDED, BUT HE SAW A
DANGER AHEAD FOR U.S. IF IT COULD NOT BEGIN TO SOLVE ITS
PROBLEMS. IT WOULD BE BAD FOR THE U.S. IF THINGS DID NOT
CHANGE.

8. COMMENT; ARBATOV'S LINE WAS ESSENTIALLY THAT U.S. SHOULD LET NEITHER SOVIET INTERNAL AFFAIRS NOR MINOR DIFFERENCES IN OTHER AREAS OF THE WORLD, SUCH AS MIDDLE EAST OR HORN OF AFRICA, STAND IN THE WAY OF SIGNATURE OF ARMS CONTROL AGREEMENTS. HE WAS CAREFUL TO SPEAK FOR HIMSELF ONLY, BUT THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT HIS PRESENTATION WAS CAREFULLY REHEARSED. HIS NEGATIVE TONE TOWARDS CARTER ADMINISTRATION WAS LIMITED TO GENERAL THEME THAT IT PAYS UNNECESSARY HEED TO UNINFORMED OR MISINFORMED PUBLIC OPINION. HENCE AMERICANS ARE A VERY DIFFICULT IF ESSENTIAL DISCUSSION PARTNER FOR THE USSR, AND IF THINGS DO NOT IMPROVE, THEY ARE GOING TO GET WORSE. TOON

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